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ABSTRACT

A course in English as a second language for diplomats, offered in Washington, D.C. is described. The course consists of two levels: the first aims at non-native speakers of English with threshold proficiency, and the second is designed for current and prospective personnel in foreign diplomatic services of non-English-speaking countries. The first level prepares students for the second. The design and content of each course level is outlined in some detail and the rationale for offering the course is discussed. Aspects of program management such as student selection and placement, class size, teacher selection and placement, teacher control of the curriculum, costs, and evaluation are also examined. (MSE)

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ENGLISH FOR DIPLOMATS

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Diplomatic Language Services

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"English for Diplomats" is a new ESP course being developed and tried out in Washington, D.C. The course has two levels. The first level is aimed at non-native speakers of English with threshold proficiency (S-1, R-1 in terms of the FSI scale) and is primarily intended to prepare them for the second level (entry requirement S-2+, R-2+). The second level consists of six modules, and is aimed exclusively at personnel in the diplomatic services of non-English-speaking countries, plus those intending to join such services.

The ten units that make up the first level of "English for Diplomats" are each designed for one week's intensive instruction (30 hours), plus homework assignments, for classes of three to eight students of average aptitude. Assessment instruments are provided at the end of each unit, and at the end of the first level; these can also be used by teacher/managers to place students or whole classes at the proper entry point in the course. Student materials for each unit, besides the usual classroom materials, include self-instructional grammar and vocabulary components (which the teacher may also elect to teach). Separately provided for teacher/managers are guidelines for native and non-native teachers, suggested techniques for different kinds of classes, a set of audio tapes that go with various units, homework assignments, and the assessment instruments.

The six modules of the second level of the course are designed for one to three weeks instruction each. This part of the course is based on guidelines from the Foreign Service Institute, U.S. Department of State, for the development of its own (foreign-language only) modules for American specialists in various overseas diplomatic functions. The modules cover consular work, diplomatic representation, political and economic reporting, public and cultural affairs (including mass media affairs), and administration and security. The choice of which modules

to teach, of course, depends entirely on the needs of the students. Both the content and the methodology are geared to students who have successfully completed the first-level course or its equivalent.

It is envisioned that "English for Diplomats," when the course is completed and published, will be used in three kinds of institutions: binational centers, university English departments and language centers, and private language schools. Demand for the course has come mainly from Third World countries, and the likelihood is that the course will be taught overseas much more often than in English-speaking countries.

Rationale for the Course

English is now the working language in a great majority of the cities around the world where diplomats are assigned. With the possible exception of Latin America, English is an indispensable tool on all continents, not only for diplomats in the strict sense, but also for attachés, technical advisers, commercial representatives, aid program administrators, information officers and mass media specialists, delegates and staff members of international organizations. Even in the more traditional areas of free-world diplomacy, English has made enormous gains, mainly at the expense of French. China, the Soviet bloc countries, and a majority of Third World countries now regard English as the foreign language of primary emphasis, not only for diplomats but also for many other kinds of specialists and for the general public. Even in cities and countries where English is not the principal working language, for example in Latin America and the "francophone" countries, English is still apt to be a widely used lingua franca.

The United States, the Soviet Union, Japan, and the larger European countries can afford to recruit or train diplomats and area specialists in many different foreign languages and cultures, and assign them to their

geographical areas of competence over significant periods of time. (The U.S. Department of State has been criticized for shortcomings in this regard, but through its Foreign Service Institute it has in fact trained large numbers of specialists in more than thirty languages; assignment, promotion, and retention of the officers is the real problem.) Moreover, the larger countries can maintain and staff very large embassies and consulates where necessary. This means that language requirements can be matched more efficiently to job descriptions -- for example, an economic officer may need to know only a world language like French, German, or Spanish, while a political or consular officer may need to know a local language as well; an administrative officer may be able to do his job entirely in English, and so on. This gives personnel managers some flexibility, not only in immediate assignments to posts but also in designating officers for language training as part of their career development.

Smaller countries, on the other hand, and countries with low budgets for foreign operations (this includes the majority of Third World countries) do not enjoy such luxuries. They cannot fund and operate Foreign Service Institutes or their equivalents, but must usually depend on their public education systems both for the recruitment and the training of their staff. More importantly, perhaps, the smaller countries cannot afford to maintain large missions overseas. In all too many cases the economic and political officer, the consul, and the administrative officer of the preceding paragraph are in fact embodied in a single person. Such a many-hatted diplomat may also serve as military attaché, press officer, intelligence station chief, student adviser, and trade representative for his country.

This means that prospective diplomats from small countries with low budgets for foreign affairs cannot possibly be expected to master all the languages they might need to use during their careers. But they must at

least be competent enough in one language (besides their own) to use it in many different functions, corresponding to the many "hats" they will wear during their careers. That language, logically, is English. But there is a further irony here. It is precisely the Third World professional who has mastered one or more world languages and who operates smoothly in the international community that is most in demand among United Nations agencies and other international organizations. The professional's home country can hardly compete, in terms of salary and other inducements, with such organizations. Consequently there is a continuous drain of prospective diplomats -- even of those trained at their own government's expense.

The need for a course like "English for Diplomats" is thus quite plain. The question should be asked, however, whether existing general English and ESP courses could not easily meet that need. After all, many of the functions of a consular or embassy officer are not very different from those of an overseas businessman. The difference here is a subtle but real one: the diplomat, unlike the businessman, must always represent his country, in all the senses of the word. He may be involved in selling its products overseas, promoting tourism to his country, and otherwise engaging in commercial activities, but there are cultural and political sides to his work which are not the normal concerns of the businessman. In fact, of the six modules of the second level of "English for Diplomats," only those on economic reporting and administration really overlap with Business English courses. The modules on consular work, representation, political reporting, and cultural affairs are geared to functions peculiar to the diplomatic service.

As for the first level of the course, it could be argued that there is considerable overlap with existing intermediate ESL and EFL general-purpose courses. But again there is a significant difference. Most

such existing courses are intended for relatively young students and prospective employees who need English for their further education or career advancement. But the typical diplomat is older and has a higher status. He is more like a teacher than a student, and more like a boss than an employee. To give some examples, many English courses have units or lessons designed to help the learner do well in an interview; in this course, the learner conducts the interview. The typical English student rents a room in a hotel, orders a meal in a restaurant, and arranges travel for himself. In the first level of "English for Diplomats" the learner rents a suite of offices, hosts a banquet, and arranges transportation and accommodation for a whole delegation.

Another characteristic of intermediate English courses in general is that they assume that the learner will be operating in an English-speaking country (for example, as a university student in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, or New Zealand) or working for an English-dominated company (for example, a multinational corporation). Neither assumption is particularly relevant to the intending diplomat, who will always be working for an organization that conducts its real business in another language, who receives his instructions and writes his reports in that language, and who may never set foot in an English-speaking country during his entire career. The cultural milieu which "English for Diplomats" assumes is the international community, not the community of native English speakers. In the larger cities of the world where English is the principal working language, or a widely used lingua franca, the foreign diplomat deals with many others for whom English is likewise a second language. And in such a community the foreign diplomat is one of the players, not one of the pawns.

"English for Diplomats" starts at the intermediate level, with this kind of focus. The reason for not including a beginning-level component

in the course is twofold. First, the content of a series of units designed to bring the learner to a threshold level (S-1, R-1) in English would not be substantially different from that of a good many existing courses. Second, experience has shown that most intending diplomats have in fact already achieved the threshold level -- usually through academic study of English in their own countries. (In many cases, the passive control of English, and especially of its vocabulary and its written modes, exceeds this level.)

In summary, the rationale for "English for Diplomats" rests on two principal needs:

- (1) the need for an intermediate course that takes into account the age, position, and likely responsibilities of the learner, and the fact that he will be operating in an English-speaking milieu but not necessarily in an English-speaking country;
- (2) the need for a professional course that emphasizes all the typical communication contexts and functions of the diplomatic service.

Characters and Settings

Reflecting the rationale for the course, the characters and settings of "English for Diplomats" are not confined to the United States or to other English-speaking countries. The international contexts in which English is a working language or a lingua franca have certain common characteristics, and these are exploited in both levels of the course. For example, on the social side, most large cities of the world have international clubs to which diplomats belong, and both the business and social activities of such clubs are often conducted in English. On the professional side, meetings and conferences of an international nature that are held all over the world normally use English as one of

the working languages. The omnipresent English mass media -- press, radio, television, films, records, videos, and data banks -- serve both as sources of information for the diplomat and as channels for promoting his own country's interests.

The settings for communication in English, in both levels of the course, are distributed over all five continents and the major archipelagos. Some settings are identified as to geographical location, and others are placed in mythical countries (e.g. "Borania") which clearly belong to the Third World but which no student is obliged to defend, praise, or feel loyalty towards. On the other hand, the student's own nation (identified in the text materials as "The Country of Somewhere") is never the setting of communication events but is constantly talked about, because that is one of the responsibilities of the diplomat. Certain typical cities, such as those for which maps are provided in the student materials, recur again and again in the progression of the course. Travel schedules, however, are planned when possible with reference to real airline, train, and bus schedules, with costs being figured at current fare levels.

Like the settings, the principal characters of "English for Diplomats" figure in many different situations. Certain stock characters are generic and fictitious -- they do not represent any particular country but speak real languages. Native speakers of English, however, are usually identified as to country of origin; this is because, when their voices are heard on tapes, they will betray their national origins in any case. Recurrent characters (referred to in the text as "Mr. and Mrs. Commonname") are a couple who represent the student's own country. Although they speak English, students are responsible for adapting the rest of their behavior to national customs.

Not all the characters are fictitious. Each student, during the course, is gradually required to build up a dossier on himself. When

he becomes a role player in certain situations, he plays himself and must adhere to the facts given in the dossier, which in some cases are also made available to other role-players. Occasionally, teachers, managers, and administrators from the institution where the course is given (whether native speakers of English or not) are asked to play roles, and one type of role involves playing themselves.

The varieties of English in the printed texts and on the tapes are likewise not confined to native varieties. Although an international standard of English is maintained throughout the course, it is neither clearly American nor clearly British. (This is true of spelling, pronunciation, lexical choice, and even some grammatical features.) Voices on the tapes include all sorts of accents, both native and non-native. The reason for this is that the intending diplomats, at some stage of their careers, will probably be exposed to many different accents and varieties of English. They must be able to deal with this range of variation at least on a comprehension level.

In terms of types, rather than national origins, the characters in the course include diplomats, military personnel, businessmen and trade representatives, local politicians and civil servants, mass media representatives, office, domestic, and service workers, tradesmen and retailers, non-working husbands and wives of officials, and ordinary citizens. The settings, apart from their geographical location, include the following:

- embassies, consulates, and other diplomatic missions
- international organizations and multinational firms
- local government and business offices
- post offices, airports, railroad stations, and travel offices
- private residences and apartments
- clubs, hotels, restaurants, theaters, and sports arenas

retail stores and repair shops

Every effort has been made, in short, to include all the major settings where the diplomat may need to use English, and to people them with characters he is likely to have to communicate with.

The First Level Components

The first level of "English for Diplomats" is primarily designed to bring the learner from the threshold level of proficiency in English (S-1, R-1) to the point where he can profit from training in one or more of the professionally-oriented modules of the second level (entry requirement S-2+, R-2+). The content of the first part of the course, however, is relevant not only to prospective diplomats, attachés, and cultural officers, but also to businessmen, media representatives, and others who serve overseas in a private capacity. The communicative tasks and areas are geared to life and work in typical diplomatic posts where English is either the principal working language or widely used lingua franca. As we have seen in the preceding section, this means that host-country settings, characters, and situations are not confined to the United States and other English-speaking countries.

There are ten units in the first level. Each unit is designed for one week's intensive instruction (30 hours), plus homework assignments, for a class of three to eight students of average aptitude. The components of the typical unit are as follows:

(a) Classroom materials (for students and teachers):

Situation descriptions, dialogues, charts, maps, graphs, diagrams, pictorial stimuli, sample texts, reading passages, schedules, outlines, role descriptions, agendas, want ads, personal dossiers, etc.

(b) Self-instructional materials (for students):

Vocabulary and grammar exercises and explanations which are especially

relevant to each unit. (The materials are designed for self-study, but the course instructor may elect to assign them, or even teach them himself if he deems it necessary.)

(c) Teacher materials:

Overall guidelines for native and non-native instructors, suggested techniques for different kinds of classes, specific objectives of each unit, detailed sample lesson plans for each day; audio tapes, homework assignments, and assessment instruments.

The themes of the ten units of the first level are as follows:

1. Static Visual Information. The student must learn to understand and produce descriptions giving absolute and relative locations, using colors, shapes, sizes, numbers, and groupings of persons and objects. Visual stimuli and expected student products include diagrams, maps and charts, photographs and drawings, room plans, graphs, national flags, symbols, and monuments.
2. Process Description. Students move away from static stimuli to understand and produce accounts of processes and events in the future and the past -- transportation routes, instructions for assembling equipment, agendas for meetings, and the like. The situations include giving instructions and directions, planning itineraries and action sequences (for example, car maintenance, training programs), narrating past events and briefing people on future events.
3. Telephone Use I. This is the first of two units dealing with the telephone. The emphasis is on telephone etiquette in English, relaying messages, and making appointments and reservations by phone. Much of the content of Units 1 and 2 recurs here, with the difference

being that the two communicators cannot see each other and must refer to shared visual aids only verbally, without being able to point, trace lines on maps, and so forth. Situations include booking airline reservations, giving directions to a lost traveler, getting an estimate for car repairs, and dealing with a foreign student problem.

4. Public Speaking. Students progress from speaking with a fully prepared text through speaking from notes to truly extemporaneous speaking, both in social and business-related contexts. Speech topics include a description of the student's own country (for tourism promotion), after-dinner remarks, introducing a colleague who will address a group, farewell remarks on leaving a post, and briefing a group of visitors. Towards the end of the unit, various narrative, descriptive, and persuasive topics are designated for students to present extemporaneously.
5. Interview Techniques. Students learn strategies to make the most of their limited English in face-to-face interaction. Situations include being interviewed by the media, interviewing prospective employees (office and domestic), and simple forms of bargaining. The content of previous units is built upon here, with students being required to answer and frame questions in both familiar and unfamiliar areas.
6. Telephone Use II. This unit moves toward more sophisticated uses of the telephone, such as making and breaking business appointments, arranging a meeting involving participants who are at different locations, offering, accepting, and declining social invitations, seeking and giving information, and bargaining by phone. Specific situations also include following up on a car accident with calls to police and insurance agents, renting offices and living quarters, and arranging a reception.

7. Meetings and Conferences. Students sharpen their speaking, listening, and note-taking skills (and to some extent also their scanning and skimming skills) as they progress from scheduled speaking at meetings and briefing sessions to participating in group discussions and conferences, and finally to leading or chairing meetings. In this unit, students play various roles in reconstructing a monthly meeting of a club with international membership -- from determining the agenda through conducting the meeting to writing and approving the minutes.
8. Advanced Social Skills. The content includes formulas used in reception lines, small talk at luncheons, cocktail parties, and dinners, and the hosting of such events. What to say in unpleasant as well as pleasant situations is practiced. The assessment for this unit requires the student to plan and host a (simulated) social event for students and/or faculty of his institution.
9. Advanced Office Skills. Students gather information from various sources (oral and written), learn to outline and summarize for presenting an argument or giving detailed instructions to employees. Specific tasks include office meetings with commercial representatives (both buying and selling), handling a visiting professional delegation, writing efficiency reports for foreign employees (and firing one of them), and preparing an official report (presumably to be written in the student's own language) from various English-language sources.
10. Review Unit. This unit pulls together the many threads introduced in the first nine units, through complex situations that may be encountered by the diplomat overseas. It is intended to complete the "bridge" to the specialized English modules that will follow, at the second level. Tapes and texts from previous units are re-used in different ways. The assessment for Unit 10 can serve as a placement test for candidates who have not completed the first level but are apparently proficient enough in English to enter the second level directly.

The Second Level Components

Work on the second level of "English for Diplomats" is still in the planning stage. This part of the course will consist of six modules covering the most important functions of diplomats overseas. (The content will correspond closely to that of foreign-language courses, at the same level, that are now being developed at the Foreign Service Institute in the major world languages, starting with French.) Each module is designed for one to three weeks of intensive instruction, but can be taught over a longer period of time if necessary. The selection of which modules to offer, of course, will depend entirely on the needs of learners who have attained the entrance-level proficiency in English (at least S-2+, R-2+).

Many of the principal characters, settings, and themes found in the first-level course will be further developed in these professional modules. As in the case of the first ten units, the progression will always be from passive to active skills and from fixed to free communication contexts. The methodology and techniques suggested for the earlier units will also be continued here, at least for classes of three to eight students, so that the same teachers can follow through in this respect, even though much of the course content may be new to them.

The modules currently being planned are the following.

- I. Consular Work. The emphasis here will be on visa applications and other consular services which bring the diplomat into direct contact with the host-country public. Some additional content, however, will cover those occasions when the consular officer must negotiate with local officials on behalf of citizens of his own country.
- II. Diplomatic Representation. Although representing his country's formal interests is normally the responsibility of an Ambassador or a Chief of Mission, many junior officers find themselves in the

position of having to present credentials, deliver protests or démarches, negotiate at a high level, host national day celebrations, or perform other official acts of representation. The social aspects of these functions will be stressed in the module, along with the formal aspects.

- III. Political Reporting. This is an area in which every diplomat, regardless of his assigned roles, must be able to function to some degree. While overseas he serves as the eyes and ears of his country, covering everything from hard intelligence to cocktail circuit rumors. Since the actual political reports will probably be written in the diplomat's own language, the emphasis in this module will be on gathering information through various channels and organizing it, not on the writing of actual finished reports.
- IV. Economic Reporting. This module will be structured analogously to the preceding one, but with an emphasis on business, tourism, banking, foreign aid programs, and trade negotiations. Economic reporting at both the national and the international levels will be featured.
- V. Public and Cultural Affairs. Here, the functions common to organizations like the United States Information Agency, the British Council, and L'Alliance Française will be stressed: public affairs, mass media, cultural presentations, educational exchanges and student counseling, international sports competitions, and bi-national centers, for example. In terms of skills and contexts, the emphasis will be almost the reverse of that in the "reporting" modules -- that is, the learner will be promoting his own culture rather than gathering information about a foreign nation and its political and economic climate.

VI. Administration and Security. This module will be a logical extension of the first-level course, in the sense that it will sharpen skills in office and personnel management, housekeeping, finance, logistics, security, and other contexts in which the diplomat must deal with host-country nationals and the international community in English. These areas, all of which are touched on in various units of the first level, will be broadened to reflect the concerns of officers responsible for the management and protection of overseas installations -- not only embassies and consulates, but also aid and trade missions, information and cultural centers, and so on.

The components of each of the six modules -- classroom materials, self-study and teacher materials -- will be analogous to those of the first-level units, with the exception that there will be more emphasis on vocabulary and less on grammar.

Program Management

As mentioned earlier, "English for Diplomats" will probably be taught overseas more often than it is taught in the United States (or in any other English-speaking country). The institutions most likely to offer the course are binational centers that already have English language programs, university English departments and language centers, and private language schools. Some of these institutions will have instructors who are native speakers, but not all these native speakers will necessarily have had TESL/TEFL training and experience. The likelihood is that the typical instructor will be a non-native speaker of English who has had some training, along with considerable experience in teaching other kinds of English courses to citizens of his own country.

Although the course is designed for intensive learning, those institutions that cannot mount an intensive program could still consider

offering the course. A time-block of two contact hours, however, would seem to be an absolute minimum, if the training sessions are to be stretched over a longer period.

The management of a program offering "English for Diplomats" (first level, second level, or both) will be considerably simplified by the design of the course itself. This is because the conditions and problems of teaching English overseas have been largely anticipated. We can now summarize the special features of the course with a view to program management.

Student selection and placement are simplified by the assessment instruments included in the first level. While it would be desirable to have a valid, reliable English proficiency rating for each prospective student, this is not always possible. Another way of judging whether a student is ready for the first level is to administer the assessment from Unit 1. A student who scores badly on this test is probably not ready for any part of the course. For the second level, the assessment from Unit 10 can be the criterion. In a large program, new students who fall somewhere between these two criteria can be slotted into existing first-level classes, without having to wait for a new cycle to begin.

Class size is also a factor which gives the program manager some flexibility. The course is not designed to be taught one-on-one, but three students are enough to start a class. The maximum recommended class size is eight, which allows for streaming of slower and faster groups in large programs. Even within single classes some streaming is possible, because the teacher can assign self-instructional or preparatory activities to certain students while he works with smaller groups or individuals.

Teacher selection and placement is facilitated by the course design, which makes team teaching a distinct possibility. For example, an institution which has both native and non-native instructors would do

well to consider this option. A natural division of labor is suggested by the fact that the progression, in each unit or module, is always from passive to active skills, and from fixed to free performance on the part of the students. (Native speakers are often in a **better position** to judge speaking and writing performance that is not closely structured.)

Teacher guidance is also flexible. There are separate guidelines for native and non-native speakers, and for inexperienced teachers detailed lesson plans are provided. Since the teacher materials include suggested homework assignments, self-instructional materials, and assessment instruments, all instructors can feel free to select the balance between teaching and managing the course which suits them best.

Program costs are minimized by the nature of the course. Because all student materials are provided (except those produced by the students themselves and those to be sampled from local mass media output by teachers and/or students), the institution needs only to provide a small classroom equipped with a tape recorder for each class. A single instructor who is well trained in TESL/TEFL will suffice; he does not need to be a native speaker.

Evaluation is facilitated by the clearly stated objectives at the beginning of each first-level unit and each second-level module. If for some reason the institution wishes to do its own assessment, instead of using the instruments provided, the statements of objectives will make such evaluation possible. In addition, since both levels of the course are calibrated to standard English proficiency levels, external evaluation is also possible. A student completing the first level should test at S-2+, R-2+ on the FSI scale, or at about 500 on the TOEFL scale. A student completing at least two modules of the second level should test at S-3, R-3. (The TOEFL score may not increase, however, because of the highly specialized nature of the professional modules.)

In summary, the management of a program offering "English for Diplomats" is well within the capabilities of the typical U.S. language-teaching institution, and should not unduly strain the resources of an overseas binational center, a university English department or language center, or a competent private language school.